

May 2017 subject reports

English A Language and Literature

Overall grade boundaries

Higher level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0-13	14-27	28-41	42-54	55-66	67-79	80-100

Standard level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0-11	12-25	26-39	40-53	54-67	68-81	82-100

General introduction

This May saw a significant increase in the number of candidates, rising by almost 20% at both HL and SL – about 35,000 candidates in all. At both levels, about 10% of candidates came from schools new to the programme.

The overall results were very similar to those of May 2016. At HL, the mean grade was almost identical to that predicted but there were more grade 3s and below awarded and fewer grade 6s and 7s than in the previous session. At SL, however, the overall mean grade was slightly better than last year and the distribution of grades awarded was almost identical.

Generally speaking, there has been some improvement in the relevance and quality of work submitted for the early components. In this, the fifth year of the programme, it would indeed be surprising if schools that have been preparing candidates for several years had not become more familiar with the requirements and more likely to prepare them to submit relevant work than in previous years.

The exam papers were favourably received by the vast majority of teachers as regards comparison of their difficulty with previous years, their accessibility to students, the interest of their subject matter and the clarity and presentation of questions and texts. The use of colour

in Paper 1 was on the whole enthusiastically welcomed. Thus, while on the one hand there was no evidence that the early components were less successfully handled than previously and no evidence from the G2s that the teachers found the examination texts or questions more difficult than in the previous session, on the other hand many of the examiners commented that candidates often seemed less able or less well prepared to fulfil the expectations of the assessment criteria than in the past.

Detailed comments on the way the candidates performed in the four components are to be found in this report. However, several observations that emerge from the reports of the Principal Examiners at both levels are worth highlighting here for they perhaps provide some explanations of the general statement made above.

In all the components, examiners are particularly concerned that close reading of texts is not being practiced widely enough. As the Subject Guide says, “close reading is considered to be a core skill in the understanding and interpretation of literature.” Furthermore, examiners regret that not enough candidates seem prepared to discover their works or texts for themselves rather than rely on the readings and opinions of others. Personal discovery is essential if they are to show independent critical engagement with a text or a topic, an essential aim of the programme. A significant concern of the examining team as a whole is how little evidence of such engagement can be found in the work submitted for the early components, as for the examinations.

The examining team would like to see less evidence of repetitive treatment of the same topics and the same texts from session to session, fewer formulaic responses in the IOC, the Written Task, the Paper 1 analysis and the Paper 2 essay.

Thus, the team would welcome any signs of greater personal engagement by candidates, of confidence in their own judgements and of the preparedness to take risks. Now that the syllabus is well-established, teachers are strongly encouraged to search out fresh examples of texts that will stimulate good writing and independent thought on the part of their students so that they, their teachers and the examiners can enjoy the benefits.

These concerns are allied to those expressed about the all too often superficial way in which two key aspects of the programme are handled by students: context and understanding of the effects of formal, stylistic or literary features of texts. More details of these two issues will be found below.

Higher level and Standard Level internal assessment

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0-4	5-9	10-13	14-17	18-20	21-24	25-30

The range and suitability of the work submitted

Most Internal Assessment moderators faced a larger challenge than usual this session as they were asked to approach moderation through the process of dynamic sampling. A few moderators had experienced the new system in the November 2016 session, and they proved an invaluable resource to help moderators new to the system. Both the system and the moderators faced some hurdles with the handling of the much larger candidature in May, but, overall, the marking settled in suitably as time passed. Under dynamic sampling, the moderators are now asked to mark to a fixed standard, as do the examiners for the other IB components, and they are no longer moderated themselves. Almost everyone adapted well to this approach and was pleased with the accessibility of the IA materials. Schools that need to have their marks moderated will now receive a much more detailed feedback report which, hopefully, should help them adapt their own marking to the IB standard. However, because now the moderators only see the school's sample as a whole at the end of the marking process, it is imperative that schools check and double check their uploads for accuracy.

The moderators reported seeing familiar works for the most part, but, as one moderator pointed out, this is not to say that these choices are in any way unsuitable for the IOC. Shakespeare is always a favourite for this assessment, as are poets, especially Duffy, Heaney, Owen, Frost, Hughes and Keats. One moderator noted that Chaucer and Milton did not seem to produce good results. Fitzgerald, Williams, Hurston, Frederick Douglass, Roy, Atwood and Adichie were also popular this year. Overall, the passages were appropriately chosen and were usually of an appropriate length and challenge for a commentary. There were, however, still moderators who indicated that teachers need to be more cautious in setting a task of equal challenge for all of their candidates, considering not only quantity but quality in their selection of passages.

Overall moderators were pleased that fewer and fewer responses are going over the fifteen-minute limit. However, almost all of them reported frustration that many responses did not make full use of the time with appropriate subsequent questioning. They find this a clear failure on the part of teachers to use the given time to help candidates earn further credit for knowledge and understanding of the extract and its literary features.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A: Knowledge and understanding of the text or extract

It is usual for moderators to indicate that most candidates show at least adequate knowledge and understanding of their extracts. Thus, it was surprising to find that this session many moderators felt that the candidates were not sufficiently covering their extracts and, therefore, did not show an adequate understanding of what had been given to them to analyze. Many candidates spent far too much time offering background information and discussing the works at large (especially broad thematic elements and topics such as plot structure or the overall development of characters in the work) and not addressing what the writer had accomplished in the forty or so lines that they had been given. Some candidates referenced only two or three lines from their extracts and, sometimes, stumbled over those lines, showing inadequate understanding of the extract. It is assumed that the candidates know the stories and situations of the works they have studied, and certainly this knowledge will inform their discussion of the

extract, but what is of concern in a commentary is whether or not the candidates can analyze how writers have used language and specific literary features to create the particular effects in the lines they have been given.

At times the moderators indicated that the inappropriate use of guiding questions was creating issues with coverage of the extract as well. Guiding questions are simply meant to be prompts in the preparation room to encourage the candidates to cover both the “what” and the “how” of that particular extract so that they fulfill both criteria A and B in their analysis. The guiding questions do not have to be answered, nor should candidates be encouraged to organize their responses around the two questions as that will inevitably limit their discussion of the extract as a whole.

Criterion B: Understanding of the use and effects of literary features

This criterion continues to be the greatest challenge for most candidates. It would seem that if close reading were practiced throughout the course, on both language and literature texts, candidates would be much more aware of the devices of all kinds being used by writers/creators to shape meaning. This criterion goes to the heart of Part 4. As the Subject Guide points out: “Close reading is considered to be a core skill in the understanding and interpretation of literature.” Candidates are expected to understand the explicit and implicit meanings of texts, and, to that end, to show an awareness of the complexities and the intricacies of their construction. Many teachers need to set a much higher standard of expectation for the thoroughness and depth that is expected in a literary commentary. Many candidates seem unprepared to discuss even basic elements of literature, confusing topics for themes, assuming characters can be discussed as though they are people rather than artistic creations, failing to understand what an image is and how it functions, or to recognize the difference between figurative and literal. The techniques employed in the various genres are often over-looked or confused between one genre and the next. Aspects of style, form, and structure are ignored. Altogether, literary analysis is a skill that requires a great deal of study and practice. Because the possibilities for analysis are so many and so varied, it is incumbent upon the teacher to use the subsequent questioning to help the candidates, even the best ones, to expand upon their analysis of the extract.

However, all that being said, there are many schools in which the study of literature is being carefully pursued, and those teachers and their candidates are to be commended for brilliant responses in which the candidates fully explore what their writers have done, discuss the effects of the various features and even probe some of the ambiguities that exist, giving the moderators clearer insight into a particular piece of text. This is one of the true rewards of marking.

Criterion C: Organization

Moderators were fairly positive about the results in this criterion, with several indicating that they felt organization was usually at least adequate, and with several others feeling there was improvement over past sessions. As always, the moderators are looking for clear, concise introductions that briefly situate the extract in the larger work, establish the significance of the extract and then indicate how this significance will be explored in the commentary. The body of the response should offer a logical analysis that incorporates a look at as much of the extract as possible, seeing how all the various elements work together to make this particular extract

of significance. And finally, there should be a clear, concise conclusion at the end, as close to the ten-minute mark as possible. If the extract is suitably rich for discussion, responses that are sizeably short cannot have been well organized. Practice with timed orals is crucial in helping candidates to know how to pace themselves and how to provide a conclusion within the time allotted.

Criterion D: Language

While most moderators found the use of language to be at least adequate, some found teacher marking of this criterion too lenient, especially in regard to halting and hesitancy, rephrasing and incompleteness of sentences, and, finally, the use of register. The oral commentary and the subsequent questioning should be conducted in a formal, academic register. At times it seems as though the teacher might be marking language for the level at which the candidate usually speaks, but not necessarily the level achieved in the actual assessment. It might be useful for teachers to have a quick listen back to the recording to be sure that the language is assessed according to how the moderator will hear it. Remember that at the higher levels a good level of fluency is expected, including a fairly broad vocabulary and a vocabulary that employs literary features correctly.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

The moderators offered several suggestions this session that they feel would enhance the performance of the candidates:

Select works that are appropriate to the candidates' interests and abilities

Practice mock orals so that timing issues are resolved. Candidates should have a sense for how many points they will need to fill 10 minutes and, conversely, how they can fully cover an extract within that time. (Teachers need to practice formulating subsequent questions that encourage further exploration of the extract and take the candidate to the 15-minute mark)

Practice close reading and analysis throughout the course and not just in Part 4 so that candidates are comfortable with correctly identifying literary features and discussing how they shape meaning and impact readers

Help candidates with techniques for organizing effective commentaries, perhaps using written commentaries as guidelines

Encourage candidates to use a formal academic register when discussing literature in class

Allow candidates to discover their works for themselves and to consider what choices writers have made in shaping the works and why, so that their commentaries show a genuine understanding of what they have read and not an attempt to parrot back what they have heard in class

Further comments

In preparation for giving the IOCs, teachers should keep the following advice in mind:

Take time to review the Subject Guide, The Handbook of Procedures, and the Teacher Support Material before beginning Part 4 of the curriculum

Amend any issues indicated in previous IA feedback to the school

Spend the necessary time to select equally challenging extracts (a continuous set of roughly 40 lines that have not been altered in any way) with carefully chosen starting and ending points; number the lines, beginning with one. Other than including the title of a poem which is considered a part of the poem itself, do not include **any** additional information on the extract, especially chapter numbers, page numbers, act/scene numbers as candidates are expected to be able to situate their extracts. Do not re-use any extracts that were not successful in previous sessions

Provide two guiding questions beneath each extract that prompt the candidates to look closely at the meaning or significance of the extract and how the writer used language and technique to achieve this significance. Remember that any information provided in a guiding question, such as a statement of what the theme is or how a character is viewed, will prevent the candidate from receiving credit for such knowledge. Indicate guiding questions with bullet points, as they are to be used as prompts only

Insist on having an appropriate time and place for the conduct of the orals that assures candidates can deliver their orals without interruption

Offer subsequent questions that are concise, relevant to the extract and that encourage further discussion of the extract so as to enhance the candidate's marks in criteria A and B. (Remember that this is not a time for teaching nor the time for quizzing a candidate on specific points learned in class. Nor is it acceptable not to ask subsequent questions)

Check all equipment periodically to assure quality recordings are being made. Do not type or make extraneous noises while the candidate is speaking

Take the time to write comments explaining how the particular marks given to a candidate were determined

Verify that all materials have been uploaded properly and on time: that all recordings are complete and audible, that all extracts and guiding questions are clean, readable and identical to what the candidate has received and, finally, that all uploaded extracts match the orals to which they are attached

Schools with more than one teacher conducting orals **must** make sure that the teachers have standardized their marking before submitting any marks.

Higher level Written Tasks

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0-5	6-11	12-18	19-23	24-28	29-33	34-40

The range and suitability of the work submitted

Overall, the range and variety of tasks submitted is very broad and much of it clearly demonstrated that the candidates were putting into practice what they had learned from the programme. Many showed that they have mastered the art of writing relevantly and effectively and a many others successfully experimented with emulating text types and styles that have interested and inspired them. This year, the political events in the United States gave rise to quite a wide variety of responses in both tasks. While certain literary texts appear with unflinching regularity from session to session, many teachers are showing a preference for new and adventurous choices and this is to be encouraged.

Examiners have observed, however, that the range of topics chosen by candidates appears to be on the decline. Repetitive treatment of the same topic from session to session, using the same text type and similar primary sources seems to suggest that in some centres the tasks are being addressed in a rather formulaic fashion. Many examiners commented on the predominance of tasks dealing with the topic of the representation of women in advertising or as a social group in literary texts. Understandably it is a popular topic, but some of the tasks that explored the topic of female stereotypes in particular were riddled with clichés ... and stereotypes. Many of the less appropriate Tasks 1s were those that had tenuous links to the programme objectives or were purely creative and neither clearly based on specific course content nor able to show any critical engagement with a relevant topic.

Here is a summary of the main points raised by examiners about the suitability of the tasks submitted:

- An increasing number of candidates, it seems, are writing *both* Task 1 and Task 2 on either the language or the literature parts of the programme – usually on literature and sometimes even on the same literary text. While some schools legitimately include literary works in their study of Parts 1 and 2, teachers should ensure that their candidates do not base both their tasks on literary texts. It is fundamental that the Written Task respect the balance between the literature and language parts of the programme.
- A candidate's familiarity with the conventions of the chosen text type was the main indicator of successful execution of a Task 1 and, in some cases, of a Task 2 response.
- Some of the work submitted was very accomplished and appropriate, much of it was at least competently executed and relevant. However, some of the tasks chosen proved quite difficult

for the candidate to execute or sustain. These candidates would have done better at meeting the requirements if the teacher had given more guidance at the outset, perhaps directing them towards a task at which they were more likely to succeed. If teachers are in doubt about their role in the process, guidance is given on page 27 of the Subject Guide.

Task 1

- Candidates submitted a wide range of suitable tasks of which diaries, letters, opinion and blogs were the most common. Too often op/ed or magazine articles were simply disguised essays and these, however well argued, could not earn high scores.

- Many examiners feel that some of the approaches candidates adopt to Task 1 are problematic in that they do not clearly address a language or a mass communication topic. Too many candidates, despite warnings made in every Subject Report, focus on emulation of the text type only without exploring a programme topic. Perhaps then it is worth repeating that the word 'topic', as it appears in the assessment descriptors, should be understood to refer to a programme topic not to any topic the student happens to be interested in. A task that merely serves as a vehicle for imitating forms or styles, whether of a literary, non-literary or mass communication type and does not *also* critically engage with a text or topic studied is very unlikely to score more than 4 for criterion B.

Language topics, in particular, are often not directly addressed. For example, a task may rail against the politics of a certain politician, or argue that sexism in advertising is wrong, but fail to engage with how language shapes our understanding (or presentation) of these issues in specific texts.

Task 2

- Although the two 'Power and privilege' questions about social groups continue to be the most popular choices for candidates, there appeared to be more responses than before to the other prescribed questions this session.

The quality of the essays depended quite a lot on how carefully the question was interpreted. The question that appeared most difficult was 'How could the text be read and interpreted differently by two different readers?' Responses often included a good deal of generalized and unsupported claims about social history and values.

- When mass media articles are used as the basis of essays, it is too often the case that the focus tends to be on the events they describe or what is reported or discussed rather than on the way they have been presented to the audience.

- Teachers are reminded that examples of approaches to the different prescribed question are given on pages 45 and 46 of the Subject Guide.

Candidate performance against each criterion

A Rationale and Outline

If only out of courtesy to the examiner, rationales and outlines must precede tasks not follow them.

The candidate has an opportunity here to earn four marks but frequently candidates do not link the task sufficiently clearly to the programme studied. When the examiner cannot establish a clear connection between what is written on the cover sheet and the rationale, the candidate is likely to lose at least one mark.

Rationales must cover the four bullet points set out on page 41 in the Subject Guide, otherwise the two points may not be earned.

For an examiner, the ideal rationale places the task in the context of the taught course, explains the particular purpose, the audience aimed at, its context and the conventions of the text type followed. The most effective rationales follow pretty much that order of presentation and use the full 300 words.

Similarly, it is observed that some candidates do not provide a clear and detailed enough outline following the guidelines on page 43 of the Guide. Many candidates provide instead an over-detailed paragraph plan that is often far too lengthy for the purposes of the outline. This practice must be discouraged. The instructions ask for 'three or four key points'.

The candidate may lose a mark also for not identifying clearly the text on which the response is based. If it is a TV programme, movie, or ad, etc., providing an accurate link to the source or, where possible, appending a reproduction of the text will avoid causing frustration for the examiner trying to locate it.

Too many students still appear not to understand that the whole point of a rationale or outline is to assist the examiner unfamiliar with what the candidate has studied so that a fair assessment of the work submitted can be made.

Task 1

B Task and content

There was a wide range of text types, topics and literary texts chosen with varying degrees of quality. While some submissions imitated the text type well or quite well, others were tenuous in terms of connection to programme texts or topics and mediocre in terms of the relevance of the content. Although less prevalent than in the past, there is still a significant number of tasks that are essays passed off as blogs or articles.

This has been said many times before and needs saying again: the imitation of text type conventions without specifically addressing and critically engaging with a language or literature topic studied will not result in a high mark for this criterion.

Many candidates need to pay more attention to layout, format and use of visuals. Texts that show little or no awareness of these conventions will not score highly on this aspect of the assessment descriptors. It should be quite clear from presentation, layout etc., what type of publication is being imitated and whether in a print or online format.

Diaries are very popular indeed but poor understanding of their conventions and purposes often detract from their effectiveness. There is also the important question of the audience addressed and the context of reception to be considered.

C Organization

Candidates generally scored well on this criterion except when the text type dictated a specific organizational structure that the candidate did not successfully replicate. Once again, better understanding of the conventions of the text type chosen would improve scores on this criterion.

D Language and Style

Many students showed a strong grasp of particular styles of writing, formal and informal. Some showed outstanding abilities here.

Typically, tasks were mostly accurate and in the 3-5 mark range, though many tasks would have benefitted from closer proof-reading to correct typing errors and other slips. Lower scores tended to be linked to candidates not writing in their first language.

In general, appropriate and effective register and style was often found in responses where these choices were indicated in the rationale.

Task 2

B Response to the question

Most essays demonstrated a good understanding of the texts studied, though some students clearly failed to grasp the implications of the chosen question. The vast majority of the candidates understood the formal expectations of Task 2 even when they digressed from the question's expectations.

While the content of responses on literary texts was usually appropriate, some of the essays based on media articles fell into the trap of discussing the issues rather than the forms and styles of representation and their effects. Some candidates struggled to meet the expectations because they had based their essays on advertisements of slender substance or on fragments of literary works.

The 'power and privilege' questions were by far the most popular and women were, by far, the most popular social group chosen though often candidates took highly individual characters (for example Nora or Ophelia) and tried, often unsuccessfully, to make them representatives of sketchily-defined social groups. Re-iterating what was said in the last report, what examiners would like to see more of here are better definition of 'social group' as well as fuller understanding of context. As for the question about groups being marginalized, silenced or excluded, candidates typically approach this in one of two ways: either how the text marginalizes, etc., (without the author being aware of it) or how marginalization, etc., is intentionally represented or discussed. Pragmatically, examiners are open to both approaches.

As for the questions on 'reader, culture and text', responses to the second of these about the text being written in a different time, place, etc., are quite often superficial. Teachers might want

to give particular advice to students about approaches that would lend themselves to this particular question.

It was encouraging this session to see what have been the less popular questions, on 'text and genre', attracting more candidates than previously. They can produce excellent essays when the student has more than just a passing familiarity with a 'genre' or with the 'other texts' borrowed from.

In the weaker responses, the candidate had often imposed a reading on a text that it could not bear, providing insufficient textual detail to support a convincing or even a relevant response.

Also characteristic of the weaker response is an over-reliance on secondary sources.

C Organization

Most responses were adequate or above for this criterion. Many provided arguments that were well supported by effectively-chosen and well-placed references to the texts but the coherence of arguments was sometimes difficult to follow. Evident in some of the weaker responses were over-long introductory paragraphs that promised little in terms of development or explanation of how the key terms of the question were to be addressed.

D Language and style

Few candidates earned less than three points here. Most essays were written in an appropriate style and register, some candidates achieving a high degree of sophistication and maturity of style. Proofreading might have eliminated errors that lost some candidates a mark on accuracy.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

- The Subject Guide remains the essential source of information about what is required of candidates submitting written tasks (see particularly pages 40-46 and 52-56.) Too many candidates are still submitting tasks that do not conform to the requirements.

- It must be made perfectly clear to students that one task must be a response to a Part 1 or 2 topic, the other to a literary text studied for Part 3 or 4. Basing both tasks on literary texts should be avoided.

- In order to ensure equity of treatment, the school's name and location and the teacher's name must not be revealed to the examiner. There are still far too many submissions providing some or all of this information. The candidate's submission should not be identified by name or number.

On the other hand, the cover sheet should indicate all the topics and texts studied, not be blacked out or selective.

- Word counts will be restored to cover sheets next May. No task should be submitted without a word count.

- Encourage students to do the examiner the courtesy of providing the stimulus material that the Task 2 is based on if it is short (e.g. poem, song lyrics, advert, article, etc.) or a clear, reliable link or bibliographic reference if it is not. Students should refrain from providing more media or other stimulus material than the examiner can reasonably be expected to read. Typically, an examiner will spend about half an hour reading and assessing both the candidate's tasks but if the stimulus material is hard to locate and/or substantial it can take significantly longer.
- Students could benefit from instruction on proper textual referencing of works cited and acknowledgement of sources, including illustrations. The sources consulted, particularly for Task 2, should be listed and this includes online study notes.

Standard level Written Tasks

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0-2	3-5	6-9	10-12	13-14	15-17	18-20

The range and suitability of the work submitted

Overall, the range of tasks submitted is fairly broad and most are suitable and much of the candidates' work demonstrated that the candidates were putting into practice what they had learned from the programme. Many showed that they have mastered the art of writing relevantly and effectively, relatively few candidates displayed originality in the way(s) in which they approached their chosen text type. Literary texts from the Anglo-American tradition still dominated but texts from a wider variety of cultures are beginning to appear.

The range of topics chosen by candidates appears to be on the decline. Repetitive treatment of the same topic from session to session, using the same text type and the same or similar primary sources seems to suggest that in some centres, tasks are being addressed in a rather formulaic and 'tired' fashion. Many examiners commented on the predominance of tasks dealing with the topic of gender in advertising. Some of tasks that explored the topic of female stereotypes were often clichéd and, ironically, full of stereotypes. Some of the less appropriate WTs had tenuous links to the programme objectives or were 'essay-like' and neither clearly based on specific course content nor able to show any critical engagement with a relevant topic.

Most WTs at SL were non-literary based. It is important that at SL candidates should be encouraged to at least think about engaging with a literary text. The candidate's familiarity with the conventions of the chosen text type was the main indicator of successful execution of the WT. There was some indication of a lack of guidance in choosing the subject of the WT, in a minority of cases candidates' work became repetitive.

Candidates submitted a wide range of suitable tasks of which diaries, letters, opinion and blogs were the most common. Too often op/ed or magazine articles were simply disguised essays and these, however well argued, could not earn high scores.

- Many examiners feel that some of the approaches candidates adopt to the WT are problematic in that they do not clearly address a language or a mass communication topic. Too many candidates, despite warnings made in every Subject Report, focus on emulation of the text type only without exploring an aspect of the programme. A candidate who does not also critically engage with a text or topic studied is very unlikely to score more than 4 for criterion B. Language topics, in particular, are often not directly addressed. For example, a task may rail against the politics of a certain politician, or argue that sexism in advertising is wrong, but fail to engage with how language shapes our understanding (or presentation) of these issues.

Candidate performance against each criterion

A Rationale

If only out of courtesy to the examiner, rationales and outlines must precede tasks not follow them. The candidate has an opportunity here to earn two marks but frequently candidates do not link the task chosen sufficiently clearly to the programme studied. When the examiner cannot establish a clear connection between what is written on the cover sheet and the rationale, the candidate is likely to lose one mark.

For an examiner, the ideal rationale places the task in the context of the taught course, explains the particular purpose, the audience aimed at, its context and the conventions of the text type followed. The most effective rationales follow that order of presentation.

Too many students still appear not to understand that the whole point of a rationale is to assist the examiner unfamiliar with what the candidate has studied so that a fair assessment of the work submitted can be made.

B Task and content

There was a wide range of text types, topics and literary texts chosen with varying degrees of quality. While some submissions imitated the text type well or quite well, others were tenuous in terms of connection to programme texts or topics and mediocre in terms of the relevance of the content. Although less prevalent than in the past, there are still a significant number of tasks that are essays passed off as blogs or articles. The imitation of text type conventions without specifically addressing and critically engaging with a language or literature topic studied will not result in a high mark for this criterion.

Many candidates need to pay more attention to layout, format and use of graphics. Texts that show little or no awareness of these conventions will not score highly on this aspect of the assessment descriptors. It should be quite clear from presentation, layout etc., what type of publication is being imitated and whether in a print or online format.

Diaries are very popular indeed but poor understanding of their conventions and purposes often detract from their effectiveness. There is also the important question of the audience addressed, the purpose and the context of reception to be considered.

C Organization

Candidates generally scored well on this criterion except when the text type dictated a specific organizational structure that the candidate did not successfully replicate. Once again, better understanding of the conventions of the text type chosen would improve scores on this criterion.

D Language and Style

Many students showed a strong grasp of particular styles of writing, formal and informal. Some showed outstanding abilities here. Typically, tasks were mostly accurate and in the 3-5 mark range, though many tasks would have benefitted from closer proof-reading to correct typos and other slips. Appropriate and effective register and style was often found in responses where these choices were indicated in the rationale.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

The Subject Guide but remains the essential source of information about what is required of candidates submitting written tasks. Too many candidates are still submitting tasks that do not conform to the requirements.

In order to ensure equity of treatment, the school's name and location and the teacher's name must not be revealed to the examiner. There are still far too many submissions providing some or all of this information.

The candidate's submission should not be identified by name or number. The cover sheet should indicate all the topics and texts studied, not be blacked out or selective. Word counts will be restored to cover sheets next May. No task should be submitted without a word count.

Students could benefit from instruction on proper textual referencing of works cited and acknowledgement of sources, including illustrations. The sources consulted should be listed and this includes online study notes.

Higher level paper one

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0-2	3-4	5-7	8-10	11-13	14-16	17-20

General comments

Although there were a few candidates who responded to both pairs or paired one text from each question, most understood the instructions and seemed comfortable with the examination format. While more candidates – approximately two-thirds – chose Question 2, that question seemed to be more difficult, with fewer excellent responses.

The areas of the programme and examination which appeared difficult for the candidates

Some candidates had difficulty with context, either speculating with no support or referring to context as a technique used by the author.

Although most candidates understand how to handle comparison, they sometimes need to pay more attention to the details of each text and the differences between the texts.

Candidates sometimes produced long, irrelevant digressions that did not enhance their analysis.

Candidates have been taught to use transitional words and phrases but many do not seem to understand that these must make logical sense in the context of their commentary.

Candidates who tried to discuss structure usually ended up merely summarizing the text. Discussions of tone and mood were also usually very poor.

While most candidates pointed out stylistic features, textual support and explanations of effects were frequently missing. Too often the effect was cited as “to interest the reader” or another such meaningless phrase. Indicating line numbers is not an acceptable way to provide support. Team leaders noted too much reliance on ethos, pathos and logos. Most candidates who used these terms did so with apparently little understanding of what they mean and little explanation of their relevance to the text.

Proofreading did not always take place. Some responses had many language errors, particularly in sentence construction. Apostrophes were often missing or misused.

The areas of the programme and examination in which candidates appeared well prepared

Most candidates know how to structure a comparison and did that well. Most responses showed a balance between the two texts. There were fewer pre-fabricated templates than in previous sessions; rather, most candidates structured their response as demanded by the texts in question. Few candidates analyzed the texts separately with only a brief conclusion linking them.

In general, candidates knew how to write about audience, purpose and stylistic features, including graphics, even if a meaningful analysis was sometimes missing: for instance, “anyone

with access to the internet” is not an adequate analysis of audience. Many also wrote well about context.

Time management was generally good. Responses showed planning and there were relatively few unfinished responses. Register was usually appropriate.

The strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the treatment of individual questions

In general, candidates coped well with Question 1. Many made good comments about context. Text A was more straightforward for them; however, some noted that, although the Blyton site advertised books written long ago and had a certain nostalgic appeal, it used contemporary web and social media advertising methods. Most included a discussion of graphic images in the two texts, although not always in detail; a few did not say much about the written word. Some subtleties may have been missed, for instance that Iain Pears’ novel is also published in paper and e-book form and that *The Famous Five* is a series. Some did not pick up on the possibility of readers’ approaching *Arcadia* in different ways or, if they did, had little to say about it. Other areas of difficulty included understanding of audience, with candidates making some rash statements about who is and is not capable of using iPhones and iPads, and – all too frequently – misunderstanding the sales purpose of B. A few had difficulty separating the novels being publicized from the texts to be analyzed.

Question 2 gave candidates more problems. Surprisingly, many – perhaps most – did not recognize C as an editorial, calling it an article or sometimes an opinion piece. Thus, few referred to the conventions of the editorial genre; some saw its stylistic features as particular to the author and referred to the text as “biased.” Few commented on the newspaper graphics. Many defined the purpose as solely informative; others had trouble identifying the audience.

Text D gave candidates the most problems of the four. Many aspects of it seemed difficult for them to understand. Some called it a novel; others a “documentation”. Audience was a problem: some assumed that it was the people of East London. Quite a few addressed context, but sometimes had vague ideas of the timing and salient facts of the Industrial Revolution and of urbanization. Others made generalizations about the U.S. based on Jack London’s nationality and situated the text within those assumptions. Very few were comfortable dealing with notions of class. Therefore, some saw the text as an indictment of the entire population of London or viewed D’s people in light of C’s points about the Japanese, seeing both groups as high-stress workaholic types. “The dominant note of their lives is materialistic” led them astray in this regard. The point about religion was generally ignored. Overall, there was too much effort to make the theme and purpose of both texts identical.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Candidates must be prepared to respond to Paper 1 questions which demand a comparison of non-thematic aspects of the texts.

Surprisingly, candidates are confused about some common text types. It must be emphasized that the context of publication does not equal a text type: that different kinds of texts might be published on a web page. For instance, one common error is to call any web text a blog. Similarly, candidates need to understand various types of newspaper texts, whether published on-line or in paper version. They should be taught the difference between editorials, opinion columns, news articles and feature articles and the differences in audience, purpose and stylistic conventions associated with each one.

Candidates must not assume, as they did too often in Question 2, that both texts are making exactly the same point. They need practice in close reading and perceiving subtleties of meaning. They also need to be told that the footnotes included are generally not part of the original text.

Candidates need to learn strategies for deciding which question to choose and for staying focused on the texts.

Candidates must practice legible handwriting. Marks will be lost if the examiner cannot read the response.

Standard level paper one

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0-2	3-4	5-6	7-9	10-13	14-16	17-20

General comments

Many examiners felt that this session there were fairly unremarkable responses and the better scripts stood out, as there seemed fewer of them. The inclusion of colour helped broaden the range of student comments.

The areas of the programme and examination which appeared difficult for the candidates

The May 2017 Language and Literature paper 1 provided two texts that students engaged with and could find a range of features to discuss. There seemed to be a balance of responses to Text 1 and Text 2 although Text 1 may have been favoured.

Criterion A and B

For both texts, candidates appeared to have difficulty identifying and being concise about the target audience and context. Candidates also had difficulty backing up their assertions with

evidence. Examiners reported "vague, unspecific answers that were not adequately supported by reference to the text". For text 1, for example, examiners reported that the audience was often given as "anyone interested in science", and for text 2, many candidates identified the audience erroneously as children, as a result of the cartoons. The identification of the target audience was often either very narrow or very broad.

Many candidates also struggled with identifying purpose, which tended to be very generic, basically to inform and/or entertain, and context, which was probably the most overlooked element in the texts. Some candidates wrote solely about purpose for their entire commentary.

A significant percentage of scripts reached low levels of achievement, especially in Criteria B. Though candidates could identify stylistic features, they exhibited difficulty in exploring effects. Tone and mood appeared problematic, with some candidates confusing tone with style. Some candidates wrote about the writer's choice of adjectives, verbs, etc. but were not able to link those to the main devices like personification, metaphor, irony, etc. There was also a tendency to summarize the texts or to give simple explanations instead of analyzing them. There was also difficulty identifying the more detailed purpose and effects of stylistic features, with examiners looking for more than candidates' over-simplistic (and often repeated) comments about "engaging the reader". Surprisingly, candidates did struggle with reading and interpreting visual texts was an issue.

Criterion C

A significant proportion of students applied one of a range of over-structured, formulaic approaches regardless of the appropriateness of the approach to the text tackled. Misuse of linguistic and literary terminology was apparent. Similar to last year many candidates still struggle to write a strong introduction that leads the reader through their argument. There is a lack of focus on developing and keeping a strong analytical thread that links stylistic features to effect and thence to audience and purpose. Construction of a cohesive and persuasive argument within the response also presented challenges. Some candidates randomly assign connectives such as "moreover, consequently, furthermore" at the beginning of sentences/paragraphs without having clear logical links between the ideas presented.

Some candidates spent too long writing involved plans (some complete drafts) and left little time for writing and developing the commentary to an appropriate length, consequently affecting criterion C scores.

Criterion D

The use of language by candidates fell largely in the 3 to 4 range and there were not so many weak writers this year but we also did not see the sophistication of the 5 band. Although language was generally appropriate candidates do need to be reminded to use punctuation!

Text 1

Few candidates saw the article in the context as a whole. Many referred to it as "cover story" then wrote only about the water molecule's journey.

At the top end of the range some candidates wrote about Jha as author of the “Water Book” therefore having written the article about the water molecule but few regarded the article within the overall context of the cover story’s “Journey of a Lifetime” declaration of “a selection of imaginary journeys” and failed to see the significance of “The Journey of a Lifetime” as a bridge or introduction to the subsequent parts –

most not listed in Text 1 but by inference part of a greater selection of articles in the edition of “New Scientist”.

Few candidates moved beyond merely mentioning the mix of science and imagination and kept the discussion at a literal level.

Few candidates dealt well with the context.

There were some misreadings, notably confusion between the human traveller and water as traveller.

Text 2

Again few candidates dealt with overall context and structure. Many omitted lines 1-12 completely.

Some candidates wrote about the trending topics/web features but most described only the infographic not seeing it as a part of a series or as a part of a larger article within a website.

Some candidates did pick up on this inference citing “Part 1” and “Part 2” but not as many as should have.

Many candidates thought that the Rome Statute was the Roman Statue and therefore ancient/not 1998 contextually. This led some candidates to make inferences about the “Roman costume” of the town crier and the justice statue.

Many candidates thought that text 2 was a blog post.

A few candidates thought that Justice Hub was the writer’s name. Few discussed the co-operation between Justice Hub and Cartoon Movement with regard to realisation of purpose and the multi-modality of the text type.

The areas of the programme and examination in which candidates appeared well prepared

The candidates generally understood both texts quite well, and addressed audience, purpose, text type, and context in a generally adequate manner. The more capable candidates appeared stronger in criteria A and B than in the previous years with many able to connect the visual with the written text and identify the theme(s) supported by the visual features.

Criterion A

Text 1

Differentiation was effectively achieved here as criterion A marks ranged from "little" to "very good". The best candidates took care to support their statements with textual evidence and understood the manifold purposes of the text. In the lower ranges there was some description and generalisation that could have applied to any text. The best responses discussed in detail the effects and purposes of the features; the nuances of specific word choices and their effects were often analysed in depth at the upper end of the mark range. Sometimes indeed, perceptive comments were given, such as the irony/contrast between water arriving in a "comet" and dynamically smashing "into Earth" but now being fixed on "this page" captured by man, made by water. Picking up on "the game is up" one candidate explained the effects of the contrast between water suffering the violent and "hellish" semantic field and the idea of the safety of its being inside the dinosaur "for a week". Likewise, one candidate wrote perceptively about the role of water as a warrior in the "violent years" in contrast to its peaceful mission of "enabling...life".

Text 2

Candidates generally responded quite well to the Justice Hub/cartoon Movement article, which incorporated an infographic but did not fully interpret it. Paraphrase and descriptive summary were evident. This text seemed to cause more problems but candidates implied some understanding of some stereotypes but largely read it as a piece to show how judges are elected. If a candidate interpreted the nuances of this text then they did well, otherwise responses were in the adequate range.

Criterion B (both Text 1 and Text 2)

Unfortunately, a few candidates did not mention stylistic features or inferred their usage generically. Overall, candidates appear well drilled in spotting techniques to write about but they need to develop skills to identify the effect of these features and articulate their own personal responses to the texts. Scripts did cover the descriptor range from "little" to "very good" and this provided for effective differentiation. Candidates that could discuss stylistic features, how they shaped meaning and the effect on the reader scored well. There was a tendency to explain the visuals, particularly text 2, but summarizing what was seen.

Criterion C (both Text 1 and Text 2)

Candidates fared well with regard to structure and organization. Many followed the rubric instruction to comment on the significance of context, audience, purpose and formal/stylistic features as these factors pointed candidates to the assessment criteria and therefore a structure to their organization. Many candidates however, took a linear approach to their commentary but did manage to fare reasonably here if they included an overview and made links so the response was coherent and the argument was well developed. Such a developed argument could only arise from good knowledge and understanding of the text and lack of textual understanding did mean that some candidates used a fragmented style. The majority of candidates appeared well prepared to write introductions, though these were often formulaic and sometimes missed nuances of the texts. There was much description and paraphrase evident but the best responses sustained an argument about the purpose and effect of the

whole text in relation to its context, resulting in a good well-developed argument.
Criterion D (both Text 1 and Text 2)

Expression was generally clear and most candidates took care to adopt an appropriate register and style for their commentary. However, many candidates omitted articles and there was often a lack of subject/verb agreement. Similar issues as text 1: Candidates could be encouraged to proof-read their work before submission as often the errors are slips in spelling and omissions of words in sentences. Much omission of the definite and indefinite article was evident leading to a stilted, fragmented style. The incorrect use/lack of apostrophe was evident.

The strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the treatment of individual questions

The texts this year were particularly interesting and allowed a wide range of candidates to engage in a meaningful way.

Text One

Appeared to be the preference of stronger candidates, with a few exceptions.

Guiding Questions for this paper tended to lead to productive engagement with the text.

Many found analysis of the image a real challenge, although they understood its significance in general terms, at least. Some did not attempt a discussion of it at all but generally candidates made good connections between the visual and the text.

Not providing a clearly defined thesis in the introduction led to many responses lacking a clearly identifiable thread of argument.

Misuse of literary and linguistic terminology.

Candidates did not seem to understand the context or the connections the image made.

Candidates were generally able to identify how the text uses a combination of scientific and imaginative language.

Some candidates did not connect the first part of the text with the article.

Most candidates noted the personification of the water molecule, but did not connect it to the effect.

There were many different aspects of this text that the candidates could choose to discuss and this helped them come up with developed responses.

The weakness with text 1 is that some candidates took the text very literally and in some cases, misinterpreted what was asked.

Text Two

Appeared to be the preference of weaker candidates.

Guiding Questions were either not followed, or for other reasons, led to less productive engagement than those for Text 1.

There was a tendency to describe and paraphrase the cartoons rather than to analyse.

The relevance of the town crier was a mystery for most candidates.

Background knowledge of the function of the ICC seemed more significant in interpreting this text than scientific knowledge in Text 1. Quite a few candidates discussed the ICC as though it were a national judicial system, or that the general population of signatory countries elected the judges.

Candidates tended to miss the subtleties of the text, possibly as a result of not understanding the function and operation of the ICC and many misunderstood the context of the text.

Few candidates noted the critical tone but missed the implicit criticisms.

Text 2 may not have provided enough obvious challenge in interpretation, leading to descriptive responses.

Most were able to understand the purpose, although the audience was dealt with in various degrees of competency.

The humour was identified by most candidates but not always fully interpreted.

Many candidates focused on the graphics to the exclusion of the text.

Candidates struggled with understanding the underlying message of text 2. Many did not see behind the description of the images. This is connected to the weakness in understanding context.

Weaker candidates placed too much focus on social media links and assertions about a young audience and missed the key points in the extract.

Many candidates found it hard to go beyond description of the infographic and it was rare to find candidates that identified stereotypes.

Some candidates went deep; not only did they describe, but they were able to say what the drawings represented about the court system and the selection of the judges. They were able to outline the message that was being sent to the reader.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

The candidates must be taught how to write analytically, this is really what Language and Literature is about.

Criterion A

Candidates must deal with the whole text - not just part - it is important to see it in its overall context. They must keep close focus on the passage throughout and be specific and detailed; all comments should only be applicable to this passage and should not be general in nature.

The need for close referencing to support all comments and ideas presented; the deconstruction of visual texts, especially the use of visual metaphor and the need to connect responses to the context must occur to score more highly for criterion A. Candidates are also advised to be more specific in their explanation of target audience as this seemed to be a weak area in this session in relation to both texts. More time may need to be spent on helping candidates be more specific in identifying audience and context. Teachers should also remind candidates of what context of a text entails and to ensure a discussion regarding audience and how this is influenced by the context.

Criterion B

Candidates must understand and articulate the effects of stylistic features beyond the generic, for example; to grab the reader's attention, to entertain, to inform etc. This is a major concern and over the last few years had seemed to improve but this year the analysis of stylistic effects was not done well.

Candidates must avoid device spotting and teachers need to help candidates understand what is expected by "the effects on the audience" for criteria B. Candidates should not only know stylistic features, but they should be able to explain their purpose in the given text.

Candidates must avoid vague, descriptive analysis and try to be as specific as possible in their explanation of stylistic features and their effects. They must analyse and not describe. Candidates also seemed to fall back on explaining technical terms before giving an example and this is not an efficient use of words and is not needed. When a text has both visuals and words the visual aspects should not be focused on at the expense of textual analysis

Criterion C

This year many candidates spent too long planning and writing drafts and did not leave enough time to write adequate commentaries. Candidates need help to have more time management as part of planning in an examination setting. Candidates also need help to develop a strategy and provide a framework for their argument or approach to analysis. They need to develop and present a clear thesis statement under exam conditions in order to provide a basic direction for the argument of the response. They should try to have some thread that holds the answer together. Teachers should continue to work on explaining the need for an overarching argument that ties the commentary together. Formulaic organization should be discouraged. It is clear that some candidates arrive at the exam with a template into which they simply inject content. It makes their responses much weaker than they would otherwise be. Transitional phrases are often used without a clear understanding of their meaning. For example, "Firstly, secondly, thirdly...in conclusion" when the ideas explored are not lists and the conclusion does not conclude.

Criterion D

Candidates have improved in this area with many in the 3-4 range but there are still repeated errors that teachers should work on in preparing their students for the examination:

Help candidates not to describe but to analyze. Attention to technical accuracy with particular attention to correct sentence structure, use of apostrophes and semi-colons.

Teach candidates to proof-read work for errors before submission in order to correct basic errors such as: tense and number agreement, spelling, article use, informal register.

Higher level paper two**Component grade boundaries**

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0-4	5-8	9-10	11-13	14-16	17-19	20-25

General comments

This year's paper proved to be as challenging as in previous years. Results seemed a bit lower but the issue seems to be the preparedness of the candidates and not the difficulty of the exam. This resulted in more papers at the lower end of the scale. The lack of preparation showed up as generalizations, summaries and a general lack of awareness or understanding of the central tenets of some of the questions. Teachers in their comments on the exam found the questions fair and appropriate and candidates chose from a wider range of questions this year so it appeared that most of the candidates were able to find a question to work with.

The areas of the programme and examination which appeared difficult for the candidates

Some candidates failed to respond to the specific requirements of the question but instead responded to either a question they had prepared for prior to the exam or they identified a key concept in the question but then ignored the other requirements of the prompt. Using a question which they had practiced prior to the exam often led to missing out on the subtleties of the actual task. To attempt to make the response fit the question candidates resorted to generalized assertions. These kinds of generalizations were more noticeable this year. Some candidates were only able to make vague and assertive claims concerning their texts and they had a difficult time illustrating their arguments with specific references.

Questions which asked the student to "go against the grain" (questions 5 and 6) required candidates to define "non-human elements" and "not knowing" or risk being too vague and general. Other questions appeared open-ended but also required some thoughtful definitions to avoid becoming "truisms" (Questions 1 and 2). In responding to any of the questions

candidates need to deal not only with what a work says in relation to the question, but also how it is presented and it is this latter requirement which was the most problematic for some candidates.

This year, context was often generalized or ignored altogether beyond a reference to the publishing date of the text. The understanding of context needs to be connected to the argument being developed. Questions 2, 4, 5 and 6 in particular seem to lend themselves to incorporating context in the response.

Appreciating “the hand of the writer” outside of plot and character was another aspect that for some was problematic and there were still a number of candidates who resorted to “what if” scenarios rather than focusing on the actual events of the text (If David Lurie or Willy Loman had a better appreciation for women then they would have been more in “control of their lives” or if Blanche didn’t lie she would have been able to go “into the light” or if Amir had not abandoned Hassan he could have been a more inspirational character.)

Finally, the legibility of the handwriting is not getting better (some examiners believe it is getting worse). In some cases, all we could do is guess at the words and hope we interpreted them correctly.

The areas of the programme and examination in which candidates appeared well prepared

Students seem comfortable dealing with plot and characterization but when the question moved outside of those two categories they often struggled with the nuances implied in the question (see questions 1, 4, 5, and 6).

There were though, some candidates who were confidently able to use multiple and varied quotations from the different texts in an impressive argument. These candidates were able to illustrate a detailed sense of context and offered interesting/insightful arguments for their questions.

Some specific texts that students seemed very comfortable with this year include *The Kite Runner*; *A Doll’s House*; *The Crucible*; *Persepolis*; *Woman at Point Zero* and *The Road*.

The strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the treatment of individual questions

Question 1.) Candidates found inspiration in many texts. The issue for one group of candidates was that after stating that a work was inspirational, they were not able to illustrate that fact with specific references to the works. The statement became a truism of “it was inspirational because it inspired me”. This is an example of a question which needed a definition by the candidate which would be specific to the texts they were discussing or they would fall into the pattern of just assuming the works were inspirational because they were literary. Discussing Mersault as inspirational because of his relationship with Marie or his mother seems limited, but focusing on women who became symbols for the treatment of all women such as Nora were easier to establish as inspirational.

Question 2.) While the question seemed open to a discussion of setting, it was surprising that so few candidates tackled the question. Those that did often seemed content with just a superficial description of the setting—it took place in America or Iran or Africa. Many candidates used *Persepolis* or *The Kite Runner* or *Things Fall Apart*—texts in which the sense of place seems so pivotal and yet plot and characterization took over and the sense of place seemed to have only a limited effect on the work.

Question 3.) One of the most popular questions-- candidates used this question to explore free will vs. fate in texts such as *Things Fall Apart* and *A Doll's House*. Candidates seemed to appreciate that this question gave them a chance to explore the philosophical ideas imbedded in the argument concerning control/destiny. The weaker candidates called what ever happened in a text “destiny” and let the argument stop with narrative summary.

Question 4.) This was not often chosen and the papers that often did the best looked at character perspectives or different reader perspectives. The papers that struggled tended to look at the texts through “different lenses”. These often became a listing of various viewpoints but lacked any real understanding of what it means to look at a text through a “feminist lens” or a “Marxist lens” or a “psycho-analytical lens”. This creation of a litany of lenses led to very general and undeveloped assertions. It seemed that some schools had given their candidates the tools to answer this question, but the results showed that candidates did not fully appreciate the different approaches they were being shown.

Question 5.) While the initial expectation for this question was that candidates would deal with “non-human” in terms of anything that was not human in the natural world, or the supernatural (paranormal beings such as ghosts or monsters or aliens), most candidates simply equated non-human with inanimate objects (symbols) without a definition of why-- “the scarlet letter in “*The Scarlet Letter*”, the poppet in “*The Crucible*”, the veil in “*Persepolis*” or lights in “*Streetcar*” or the hose in “*Salesman*”. The definition of “non-human” seemed to imply almost anything. This was a question where the candidates needed to carefully define the phrase “non-human element” or it became too vague and general and risked saying that anything was non-human. In fact, some candidates wrote their entire paper talking about various motifs, symbols, metaphors etc. and never once use the term “non-human element”.

Question 6.) This was a relatively popular question which had great possibility for some but for others became a list of what characters did not know but found out later in the text. “Willie didn't know that the house was almost paid for”; or “Blanche didn't know that Stella would remain loyal to Stanley”; or “Amir didn't know that Hassan was a half-brother”. Candidates could identify aspects of not-knowing but had difficulty in moving beyond asserting this lack of knowledge and dealing with how this “not knowing” shaped the texts. Identifying examples of “Ignorance is bliss” often led to only a list of potential topics for a discussion.

Overall the treatment of these questions seemed to be less satisfactory than in previous years. Candidates have been taught to use the term context, but seem to stop with the identification of the setting. Literary features/elements were often identified with only a limited sense of their effect on the works and/or on the readers.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

When students are only able to make superficial references to a text it appears that the works are somewhat beyond their ability. When choosing texts for part 3 schools should be aware of the reading level of their candidates and the complexity of the texts. Candidates need to provide enough context for their ideas --social, cultural and historical context for the work as a whole, and when using specific references from the texts they are advised to provide enough textual context to show understanding of what is happening at that point in the work (one caution on this, though, is that it has the potential to lead to narrative summary).

Schools are reminded that film is not an appropriate text type for study in parts 3 and 4 of the course and the literary works at the centre of the study must be printed works.

Standard level paper two

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0-3	4-6	7-10	11-13	14-17	18-20	21-25

General comments

The paper was felt to be open, interesting and accessible to students and student responses were not distorted by questions that were generally misunderstood. Linked to this was the fact that there seemed to be fewer examples where examiners felt the response had been shaped by the student's use of what one examiner called "canned" responses based less on the question than on a desire to somehow deliver all they had learnt about the text. This gave perhaps a more realistic picture of student performance with a greater sense that more students were attempting to engage directly with the questions, something which speaks to the quality and accessibility of the paper.

Despite this optimistic picture of greater student engagement, it is still far too often the case that students fall back on "class notes," their response being driven by a thematic approach to the texts supplemented by background material they have learnt, rather than engaging with the texts in an independent way based on the skills of literary analysis. This was borne out by the fact that few examiners felt students had a clear grasp of literary features and more importantly could integrate them into their analysis tending instead to simply identify them or largely ignore them apart from character and theme. In a similar way while most students had knowledge of the background to the texts and the authors relatively few were able to integrate this contextual knowledge into their argument and more than one examiner highlighted the way question 1, for example, was often seen only in terms of how the candidate responded to the texts rather than how the text might be received in the light of cultural or social context.

The areas of the programme and examination which appeared difficult for the candidates

The key areas that students appeared to find difficult were:

Failure to define the terms of the questions to the extent that their response was given coherence and a clear argument

Responses that lacked structure and organisation with students tending to bundle up large amounts of unconnected material that they did not go on to structure thereby failing to develop their argument. It would perhaps therefore be worth schools paying more attention to the skills of creating an essay. Marks in criteria C and D are often at the 2/3 level and while the pressures of the examination need to be acknowledged clear thesis statements were rare and the issue of students pushing the question aside in their eagerness to show all they knew about the texts was as noted above much too common. This often led to a presentation of themes or key literary features and then a text 1 followed by text 2 structure that often failed to show an argument developed in the light of the question

Connecting stylistic features to the argument and ideas being presented as opposed to identifying and listing them was also a concern and very few students seemed able to give much sense of the effects they had on the reader. Few students seemed to give much account of the way graphic features can be analysed.

The areas of the programme and examination in which candidates appeared well prepared

Candidates generally knew their texts well and where they engaged with the question this knowledge was put to the service of some thoughtful and perceptive analyses. There was clearly good knowledge of context though this did not always move beyond being background. Students showed clear understanding of character and theme and how these elements work together in texts, rarely however was there a clear understanding shown of the effects of these or other literary features on the audience

The strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the treatment of individual questions

Question 1.) Too few students were able to give a clear idea of how they understood “inspiration” and how this might affect the reader. Inspiration was often seen as simply a matter of agreeing with the theme of a work rather being rooted in an understanding of how this inspiration was provoked in the reader. Responses were therefore often general and open ended failing to explain what in the texts might inspire the reader. Only the best candidates were able to discuss the “how” and the “why.”

Question 2.) This was generally handled fairly well by students. Surprisingly few students looked at the way geographical place was presented in the texts, how it might have metaphorical or emblematic significance and how that was conveyed to the reader. Many seemed to see “place” as a loose term that could denote any thematic area and were often unable to defend this in their argument. Responses looking at place as social class were common but with mixed results.

Question 3.) The most popular question and generally well handled. Students took advantage of the fact that it applied to most of the texts studied. Weaknesses were evident when students did not always define destiny or control effectively or failed to move beyond character to look at other aspects of the texts.

Question 4.) Examiners reported that strong candidates were able to give some excellent responses here. Others found however that generally students did not understand the idea of perspectives clearly and many made heavy weather of the question discussing many unrelated perspectives by characters that did not relate to the context of production and reception or showed how the texts might be interpreted in a variety of ways.

Question 5.) The definition of non-human challenged students and responses tended to fall into two camps: either those that defined “non-human” clearly and defended this well or those that saw anything except the characters themselves as non-human, at times just listing symbols or objects in the text.

Question 6.) Students seemed to find it difficult to discuss the idea that “ignorance is bliss” and the concept of “not knowing” in the same essay and this led to many confused responses. How well this was answered seemed to depend more than in most of the other questions on the texts used, with 1984 and The Crucible working well here.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

One examiner wrote: “Many candidates struggled to fit their knowledge of the texts to the requirement of the question and this led to many uneven responses. There were two principal reasons for this. The first was because of a failure to make the cognitive leap from a literal to an analytical understanding of the question. The second was because the candidate chose to front load their knowledge of the texts at the expense of making an argument in response to the question.” While there are clear signs of improvement in this area this session the lack of evidence of independent engagement with the texts remains our biggest single concern. This is particularly frustrating as there is clearly some excellent teaching going on in schools. Students need, however, to be equipped with the skills that make them independent as well as knowledgeable readers. This is the bedrock of the approach to learning that needs to be adopted. The evidence that this paper gave of improved student performance was where they felt free to “wrestle with the Angel of Difficulty” and use the knowledge they are clearly being

taught in a creative and effective way to engage directly with the texts and the questions. Clearly in these cases this was a risk worth taking.

To turn to specific activities, examiners also felt that students should engage with the learning outcomes tested in this paper as directly as they could. Indeed, practice generally was felt to be important to address a number of issues, among them the fact that clear substantiation of the claims students make about the text is actually uncommon. It is clear also that as noted above addressing how context can be understood, though something that has steadily improved, is still presented by many students as a 'bolt on' rather than assimilating it with their understanding of the whole text. Students should not be taught about the text's context in isolation but should be helped to understand how it shapes the production and reception of the texts. Essays are often poorly structured putting quantity before quality. This kind of work does not need to be dry or smack of teaching to the text but is an ideal opportunity for peer review and giving students ownership and understanding of the value of criterion-based assessment of their work.

Schools are reminded that film is not an appropriate text type for study in parts 3 and 4 of the course and the literary works at the centre of the study must be printed works.